1: Rivers E-5 (ca. 1901-02) 1906 Toda
213

CHAPTER X

PRAYER

234 ×
373 ●
771
782
788

IN the chapters in which the ritual of the dairies has been described, one of the most important features of the ceremonial has been passed over which must now be fully described. This feature is the prayer which is always offered at certain stages of the dairy operations. In the village dairies, of whatever kind they may be, no prayer is offered at the morning ceremonial. In the evening the prayer of the dairy is recited twice—once when lighting the lamp, and once when shutting the buffaloes in their enclosure for the night, the prayer on this occasion being said in front of the entrance to the pen.

At the *ti* dairy the *palol* prays both morning and evening. In the morning he prays when lighting the lamp and after he has finished milking; in the evening prayer is offered on both these occasions, and also when shutting up the buffaloes for the night. The *palol* also repeats a few clauses when going out to milk. Prayers are said on certain other ceremonial occasions, and clauses from the prayers are frequently uttered during the many ceremonies of the dairy.

At the evening ceremonial of the village dairy the prayer is said when the lamp is lighted, while during the morning ceremonial, at which the lamp is usually not lighted, there is no prayer. This suggests that the prayer is especially related to the lamp-lighting, and that some idea of worship of the light is involved, but occasionally for some special reason, such as unusual darkness, the lamp may be lighted in the morning, and on these occasions the prayer is not used. Nevertheless, the relation between lamp-lighting and prayer

1: Rivers E-5 (ca. 1901-02) 1906 Toda

234X 373 771 782 788 both at the village and *ti* dairies has probably some significance, and, taken in conjunction with the undoubted salutation of the sun, it points to some degree of worship of light and its sources which may at one time have formed a more marked feature of the Toda religion than seems at present to be the case.

234X 782 788 The prayer when shutting up the buffaloes for the night is common to both *ti* and village dairies. The night is the dangerous time for Toda buffaloes, which are not infrequently killed by tigers, and the prayer on the occasion of closing the pen is probably designed to promote their safety.

At the prayer uttered at the close of the milking at the *ti* dairy the *palol* adopts a special attitude which is shown in Fig. 28. He prays leaning on his wand, the *pokvet*, with his hands crossed over one another. This attitude is not employed in the village dairy, and only on this occasion at the *ti* dairy.

[195] In all cases the prayer is uttered "in the throat," so that the words cannot be distinguished by any one who may hear them. Whenever I listened to the recital of a prayer as it was being offered by a dairyman within the dairy, I heard only a gurgling noise in which no words could be distinguished. On one occasion I was allowed to approach the *ti* dairy at Mòdr while the first prayer was being offered by the *palol*. I heard the beating on the *persin* (see p. 92) which accompanies this prayer, and at intervals in the monotonous sound produced by the voice of the *palol* there were pauses. As we shall see, the prayer of the *ti* has certain sections which are distinguished from one another, and it seemed possible that these pauses marked off the different portions of the prayer, but it was clear that this was not the case, the *palol* only stopping when the necessity for taking a new breath became imperative.

234X 184 788 782 621 Each village has its own prayer, and so far as I could ascertain this prayer is used in all the dairies of the village; thus I believe that at Taradr the same prayer would be used in both *kugvali* and *tarvali*. This is not, however, a point on which I can speak positively, for there was much reluctance to talk about this subject and many of the Todas absolutely

1: Rivers E-5 (ca. 1901-02) 1906 Toda

water there. Light is undoubtedly an object of reverence to the Todas. Captain Harkness states that when the household lamp is lighted in the evening, obeisance is paid to it by bringing the right hand to the face, and this sign of reverence is still shown. In the dairy ceremonial the lamp and the light it gives are also undoubtedly reverenced, and lighting the lamp is, as we have seen, an act of a ceremonial character.

In some cases the lamps used in the dairies are certainly very ancient and are believed to have come from Amnòdr, but it is clear that they are not reverenced merely on this account, for a lamp of modern origin would, when once consecrated, be treated with as much reverence as those which had come down from antiquity.

I did not learn that any sign of reverence is paid to fire, but the fire of the dairy may undoubtedly be said to have a sacred character. Whenever a new dairy is visited or an old dairy is reconsecrated in connexion with the *pepkaricha* ceremony, fire is made afresh by friction. Once made, it was, so far as I could learn, kept continuously alight; if on any occasion the fire should go out, it would have to be made again by friction. In the *ti* dairy there are two fireplaces, one in which fire burns continuously, while the other is lighted by brands transferred to it from the other, and the lamp is lighted by a brand taken from this sacred fire. Here it would almost appear as if the former fire had a profane character, so that it would be regarded as desecration to light the sacred lamp directly from it.

The fire of the *tòratthwaskal* is used to cook food which has come from outside, and the use of an intermediate fire to light the lamp is in keeping with the general law of the procedure of the *ti* dairy, according to which the sacred objects are prevented from all possible contamination from the outer world by employing vessels or other objects as intermediaries.

Fire has also to be made by friction in other ceremonies, and especially at those called *teutütusthchi* and *erkumptthpimi* and at the funerals of males. At the first ceremony the fire is made by the *palol*, and at the second by the dairyman conducting the ceremony. At the *azaramkedr* of a man the fire is made by a man of the same clan as the deceased, and this

2: Marshall G-5 (1870) 1873 Toda

sacred nature of such office, advanced in popular estimation until they are viewed in the aspect of priests. The high priest, from being a servant of certain Gods, has become confused with Godhead itself. A family styling itself 'sons of the Gods,' has developed—though without arrogation to caste pretensions—into a Levitical clan, inheritors of the highest priestly office; its males being prepared and chastened thereto in sacred groves, by the use of a plant set apart for the purpose, and by abstinence from sensual pleasures; the females of the entire tribe, being not only excluded from participation in such duties, but debarred approach to all holy precincts.

These points appear to me to embrace the whole of what may be held to be Toda—performed—religion unadulterated.

They acknowledge the existence of Gods, *perhaps* even of a Supreme God—Ûsuru[1] Swâmi—but their ideas on the subject are quite undeveloped. I think I trace in them a partiality to the regard of *light*—apart from fire—as *par excellence*, the manifestation of divinity. Their beliefs, whatever they may be, are so little attended with formal signs of adoration, that we cannot, with any degree of confidence, assert this or that to be their creed. Still I believe I have grounds for the opinion that these people have a strong bias in favour of *light*;[2] the natural bent of their mind being such, that if any other race would work out for them the idea, connecting Ûsuru Swâmi with some such attribute of divinity as light, they could soon be brought to exalt Bêl into 'a king above all gods:' the more readily if deference to the cow was inculcated with such a teaching.

I submit the suggestion as one having a possible value in determining the ethnic affinities of the Toda race: and as

[1] See note 3 of Chapter XII.

[2] Note the Toda words in Chapter XXIX., showing how frequently the word 'bel' occurs, even in my small vocabulary; see *dawn*, *light*, *silver*, *bird*, *white*. Also, the names of men, and of Gods, given in previous Chapters.